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ABSTRACT

Focusing on reinforcing students' reading skills at home, this pamphlet emphasizes that parents should read aloud to children, talk to them about their experiences, take them places, limit their television-watching, and take an interest in their reading progress. Children's success and interest in reading is said to depend largely on whether they acquire knowledge at home, parents converse with them, they are encouraged to talk about their feelings, and--most importantly--whether parents read aloud to them. It is suggested that parents: (1) begin reading to children as early as possible; (2) talk to children about the stories; (3) relate story episodes to real-life events; (4) teach children the alphabet; (5) provide a proper place to read; (6) obtain records with follow-along books for children; (7) encourage children to watch educational television programs; (8) not expect that simply placing children in front of a computer terminal will improve their reading; (9) encourage children to make scrapbooks of letters and words; (10) prepare children to learning phonics; (11) encourage a positive attitude toward school; (12) keep abreast of children's school performance; (13) make weekly trips to the library with children; (14) initiate a reading hour; and (15) stay interested and involved in children's growth as readers. (JD)

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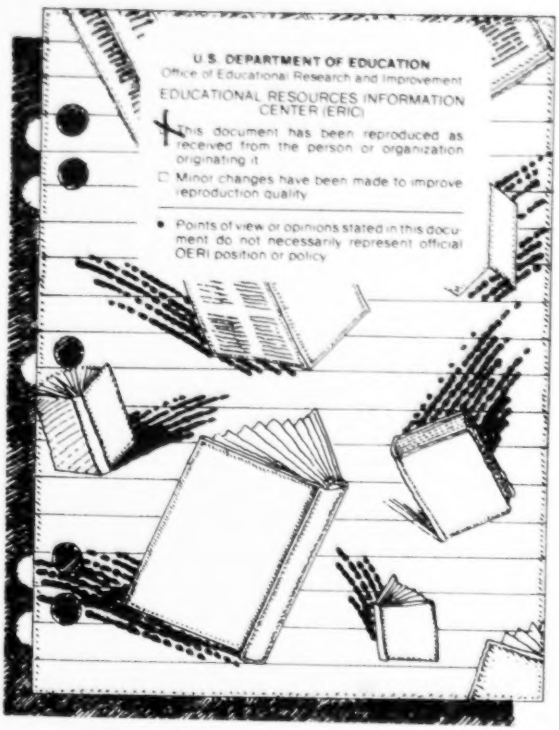
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"We must make sure we have put our children first and that their education is a top priority."
President Ronald Reagan

YOUR child, like most children, will learn **how** to read. Whether the child **will** read and read fluently depends partly on **you.**

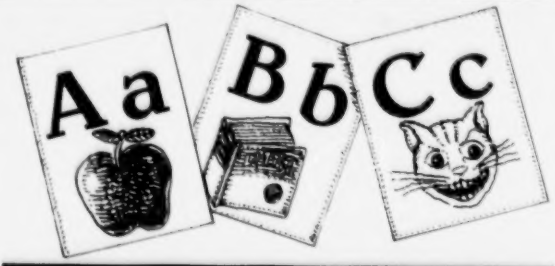
Children who read well come from homes in which there are plenty of books, magazines, and newspapers and in which everyone reads—parents, brothers, and sisters. Their parents encourage reading and make time for it. It's clear that the family enjoys reading.

Children who read well have parents who:

- Read aloud to them
- Talk to them about their ideas and experiences
- Take them places
- Let them watch television but limit it
- Take an interest in their reading progress

If you want your child to read well and with understanding—to get "hooked on books"—begin early to lay the right foundation.

You need not be a professional teacher yourself. You do need to **care** and to take **every opportunity** to help your child learn about the written language.



Influences

CERTAIN things influence children's success and interest in reading. They are:

Wide knowledge. The more knowledge children acquire at home the greater their chances to become successful readers. Children who go on trips, walk in parks, and visit museums and zoos get good background knowledge for school reading.

Thoughtful talking. The way in which you talk to your child about things makes a big difference. Talking can increase the child's supply of concepts and vocabulary. It's not enough to ask a question. ("What do you think is under the windshield wiper?") Ask a question that makes the child think. ("Why do you think there's a slip of paper under the windshield wiper?") Thought-provoking questions stimulate the curiosity needed for success in reading.

The content and style of the language you use with your child will influence the child's school achievement in reading.

Talk about events. Encourage children to think about past and future events. Don't allow conversation to focus entirely on ongoing events, for example, the clothes the child is putting on or the food that is being eaten for dinner.

Ask your children to describe something in which you did not participate—for instance, a visit to a friend's home. This gives children a chance to use their memories, reflect on experience, learn to describe people and events, and tell complete stories.

Children who hold lengthy conversations at home learn to reflect on experience and to construct meaning from events. This is part of their learning to read and understanding what they read.

As mentioned earlier in this leaflet, have lots of reading materials around your home. Let your children see you reading and enjoying it.

Things To Do

READ aloud. This is the single most important thing you can do for your children. It's especially important in the pre-school years, **but don't stop reading aloud to children after they learn to read.** Reading aloud forms an important bond between you and your children.

When reading aloud, keep certain things in mind. For instance, pre-schoolers enjoy hearing the same story over and over again. Books that repeat phrases, such as ***This Is The House That Jack Built,*** are special favorites and give very young children an opportunity to participate by reading the repetitive parts with you. This lets children know that they can read and that reading can be fun.

Begin reading to a child when the child is a year old or even younger. Read from simple picture books. Cardboard pages are fairly easy for a toddler to turn and this exercise will help a child learn how to take care of books.

Talk to your children about the stories you read. Help toddlers learn to identify letters and words. Talk about the meaning of words. Talk about your favorite children's books and read them aloud. Ask what your children think about the stories and why they think that.

Ask questions about a story that make children think. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." For instance, if you're reading your son a story about a dog, don't ask if he likes dogs but which dogs he likes best and why.

Let these questions carry over to other areas of the child's life. Encourage the child to discuss daily activities. If your daughter spent the day with the babysitter, ask what they did and how or why they did it. Always ask questions that require children to use their memories and reflect on their experiences. Talking about experiences helps a child learn about concepts and helps build vocabulary. These abilities help your child to become a good reader.

If you're reading to an older child or to several children, consider wonderful classics like ***The Call of the Wild, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,*** and ***The Red Badge of Courage.***

Do relate episodes in stories to real-life events. If you've been reading ***Huckleberry Finn*** to your children, discuss the friendship between Huck and Jim and compare it with your children's friendships.

Teach alphabet letters. It's never too soon to begin teaching a youngster to recognize letters of the alphabet. Point out letters on signs, food cans, cereal boxes, in stories, and in books. For example, when reading ***The Three Bears,*** point out the letter "T" in the story, then ask your child to pick out the letter "T" from alphabet blocks. And all children love to find the letters in their names!

Provide a place to read. Make sure that your child has a comfortable, quiet, well-lighted place to read or play with reading materials.

Materials. Have plenty of paper, pencils, chalkboards, and crayons for your child to use in drawing and writing. Writing helps children learn the relationships between letters and sounds. If the child is too young to write with a pencil, use magnetic boards and letters.

Records and Tapes. You can borrow records and tapes from the library that have follow-along books for young children. They add variety to reading activities.

Television. If your child likes to watch "Sesame Street" or "Mister Rogers" or any other educational TV program, help relate the TV lesson to other situations. For example, if the show focuses on the letter "B," have your child give you examples of other words beginning with "B." Have the child show you a toy which begins with that letter, such as a ball or a bear.

Many parents worry that TV may adversely affect a child's reading skills. Research shows that watching for a reasonable amount of time—no more than 10 hours weekly—is all right and may even help a child learn. In fact, the dramatization of a novel or an animated production of a favorite story may inspire a child to read the book or story.

Computers. Many companies are developing reading programs for home computers. At present, however, there's little solid information about the impact of computers on children's reading. One thing we do know: simply placing children in front of computer terminals with reading software programs won't teach them to read.

Make a scrapbook. Encourage your child to make scrapbooks. This activity can help the child to identify words and letters. Have a pre-schooler make an alphabet scrapbook using an old notebook or sheets of cardboard tied with a shoestring. One day the child could work on "A" and cut pictures from magazines beginning with "A"—apple, airplane, automobile. The next day the child could work on "B."

An older child may enjoy keeping a scrapbook about a hobby, a favorite singer, or sport.

Help prepare for phonics. Help prepare a young child for learning phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds) as phonics will be an important part of reading lessons in the first and second grades. Label objects in the child's bedroom—clock, dresser, chair, curtain, window, toys, etc., to help the child relate the sound of the word to the written word. Teach the child rhymes and alphabet songs. Encourage scribbling and tracing letters on paper.

Talking About School. You can increase children's reading success by helping them look forward to school as a happy place. Always talk about school in a pleasant, positive way.

Monitor performance. It's important to keep tabs on children's school performance and make sure that they do their homework correctly. Visit teachers and observe classrooms periodically.

Visit the library. Make weekly trips to the library. Show your child the variety of things to read: books on hobbies, animals, crafts, sports, famous people, etc.

Have a reading hour. Let your child know how important reading is by suggesting reading as a leisure time activity, or setting aside an established "reading hour" every night, perhaps just before bedtime.

Stay involved. Stay interested and involved in your child's growth as a reader. Encourage your child to read to you. Praise the child's progress. Try to give the child a feeling of "can do" confidence. That's what reading is all about!

To order a descriptive list of the best books published in 1984 for pre-school through middle-school-age children, send $1.00 to Books for Children, Consumer Information Center, Department 109N, Pueblo, Colo. 81002.

"Parents are our children's first and most important teachers; classroom teachers are parents' trustees."

William J. Bennett,
Secretary of Education